DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 109 TM 031 852

TITLE	School Reform Resource Manual.
INSTITUTION	Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, Aurora, CO.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	43p.; Rosalie Torres drafted the first edition. Bryan Goodwin and Barbara Gaddy edited, revised, and finalized the manual.
CONTRACT	RJ96006101
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Change; Effective Schools Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Development; *Resources; *School Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS	*Mid Continent Regional Educational Laboratory; *Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to help schools make successful school reform a reality. It provides the background and perspectives necessary for a school constituency to understand the current climate of education reform in the United States and what is known about successful school reform. The manual also provides inquiry-based techniques for conducting a study of school strengths, weaknesses, and student needs, developing a comprehensive reform program, selecting a model to meet the school's needs, and building ownership of, implementing, and sustaining reform. Following an introduction, chapters are organized around themes of: (1) the history and background of reform; (2) understanding school reform; (3) getting started at reform; (4) planning for reform; and (5) sustaining school reform. The manual is designed for use by a team of individuals. An appendix describes eight resource organizations and materials. (Contains 29 references.) (SLD)

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School Reform Resource Manual

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This publication is based on work sponsored, wholly or in part, by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), Department of Education, under Contract Number #RJ96006101. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A team of individuals contributed to the completion of this manual. In particular, Dr. Rosalie Torres conceptualized, researched, compiled materials for, and drafted the first version of this document. McREL staff members Bryan Goodwin and Barbara Gaddy were responsible for editing, revising, and finalizing the manual.

Together, these individuals have created what I hope will be a useful tool for school leaders — a manual to help guide schools through the difficult, yet ultimately rewarding process of comprehensive reform.

Louis F. Cicchinelli, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President and Deputy Director
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning
August 2000

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCING THE MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to help schools make successful school reform a reality. It is designed to support local reform efforts in two major ways. First, it provides the *background and perspectives* necessary for your school to understand

- the current climate of education reform in the United States;
- why past reform efforts have failed;
- the nature of change in education systems; and
- what we have learned about successful school reform.

Second, this manual provides *inquiry-based techniques* for

- conducting a study of school strengths, weaknesses, and student needs;
- developing a comprehensive reform program;
- selecting a reform model(s) to help meet your school's needs; and
- building ownership of, implementing and sustaining reform.

This manual is designed primarily for reform efforts initiated by individual schools and will be useful for the following people:

- Principals
- Teachers
- Parents
- Community members
- Education consultants
- District administrators

OVERVIEW OF THE MANUAL

Subsequent chapters of this manual are organized around five major topics, as described below.

Chapter 2, The History and Background of Reform, briefly reviews how school reform came about, its defining characteristics, and how various reform models can be categorized.

Chapter 3, Understanding School Reform, explores what we know about why school reform efforts fail or succeed. This chapter also examines 10 components of successful school reform.

Chapter 4, Getting Started, describes how to set goals, identify student learning needs, and assess your school's strengths and weaknesses. It then describes how to research and select a reform program or programs that will help meet these needs, complement your school's strengths, and address its weaknesses.

Chapter 5, Planning for Reform, reviews the basic elements of an action plan and discusses how to translate your school's needs into an action plan.

Chapter 6, Sustaining Successful School Reform, highlights the role of continuous inquiry, reflection, and refinement in successful school reform. It discusses the nature of change in organizations and how to maintain a spirit of inquiry to ensure that your reforms become your school's new modus operandi.

Although we have designed the chapters in this manual to mirror the sequence of reform implementation, we recommend reading the entire manual before embarking on reform so that those involved in the process can develop a common understanding of reform. This will also help everyone prepare for later aspects of the process.

This manual is designed to be used by a team of individuals. An existing school improvement team or advisory team might be the appropriate group to undertake the work of making successful reform a reality at your school. Otherwise, the first step in the reform process is to build a comprehensive reform team, as described in the next section.

CREATING A REFORM TEAM

Your reform team should include individuals from many stakeholder groups, including teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and, possibly, secondary school students. Community members on the team may represent local political, religious, social service, senior citizen, or business organizations.

It is particularly important to ensure that the composition of the team adequately represents your school's students, staff, and community members in terms of race, ethnicity, disabilities, and English proficiency. To the extent possible, the membership of the team should be balanced across education level, economic status, profession, and neighborhood. And, as Carr (1995) notes, you may also want to look for team members with the following characteristics:

- Task/outcomes-oriented
- Credible, respected in the school community
- Cooperative
- Skilled at interpersonal relationships
- Open-minded
- Insightful
- Convinced of the need for reform in education

Ideas for Recruiting Team Members

Prospective team members should be queried about their availability to participate over the entire course of time it will take to plan a comprehensive reform program. Possible contact strategies might include the following:

- Personally contact potential members.
- Mail fliers or letters to potential members.
- Send fliers or letters home with students.
- Put an announcement in the school's newsletter.
- Set up a recruitment table at your school's open house.
- Place an announcement or advertisement in the local newspaper.
- Make announcements during PTA meetings or school events.

Recruiters and recruitment announcements should explain the purpose of the team and stress the amount of time that will be required at key points throughout the process. Reading through the entire manual, as suggested earlier, can help you determine how much time the process of developing an action plan for reform is likely to take. A general guideline is that a reasonably thorough treatment of the process takes no less than four to six months. However, the amount of time it will take will depend on a number of factors, including

- how frequently the team meets,
- the length of each meeting,
- how much student performance data your team gathers and reviews,
- how many reform models you investigate and to what extent, and
- how detailed the action plan is that your team develops.

In addition, it is important to determine who will provide facilitation, leadership, and evaluation expertise for the team. All three areas of support will be necessary for your team to accomplish its work efficiently and effectively. These responsibilities might be shared among team members, and/or with an outside facilitator. The facilitator might be someone from your district or an outside, independent contractor. Planning grants sometimes provide funds for an outside facilitator, particularly one who not only has facilitation skills, but also program design and evaluation expertise.

Finally, it's critical to recognize the importance of building support among teachers, staff members and parents throughout this process. Your team should work closely with members of the school community, not only keeping them informed of the team's work, but also getting input and building consensus. This does not necessarily mean that your entire school staff needs to be on board from the outset, but it is important to develop at least a core group of supporters who can help you build broader consensus over time.

CHAPTER 2:

THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF REFORM

As we begin a new century, educators across America are asking how they can prepare students for the unique challenges these young people will face. The answer is not a simple one, given the economic, political, and social changes our country has experienced (Murphy, 1998).

CLIMATE OF REFORM

Economically, we are moving from an industrial age to an information age, which has resulted in a greater need for a more highly educated workforce. Politically, faith in government and confidence in public institutions are declining. Socially, evidence of belief in a set of shared values eludes us, ethnic diversity is increasing, and the number of youth affected by poverty, crime, drug addiction, and malnutrition is rising. For schools, these changes are contributing to a shift from a focus on resources and processes to a focus on results, from anecdotes about success to evidence of success, from rules for compliance to expectations for performance (Education Commission of the States, 1999).

In response to these growing pressures, various initiatives to improve schools have surfaced, along with a host of terms and phrases, such as *accountability*, *effective schools*, *school choice*, *standards*, *whole school reform*, and *systemic reform*, to name just a few. As a result, many educators are left feeling that they "are always responding to one reform proposal or another" (Mehlinger, 1999, p. 23). Most recently, federal legislation has brought comprehensive school reform (CSR) into the limelight. Before addressing this concept in more detail, it's useful to briefly review the history of school reform to explain how we arrived where we are today.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHOOL REFORM

ACCOUNTABILITY is one of the most frequently used terms in education today — and with good reason. The accountability movement actually began in the 1970s with state-legislated mandates that held schools and districts accountable for academic results. In addition, legislation was passed allowing states to take over academically deficient or financially bankrupt school districts. Originally, accountability was not tied to student performance on standards as it is today, but rather, to increases in graduation rates, attendance, and other measures of student performance. The rationale behind the accountability movement was that demanding results from students, teachers, schools, districts, and states would effect significant change in teaching practices and student learning (Simmons, 1999).

The 1980s saw the emergence of **SYSTEMIC REFORM**, an approach based on the idea that change should be focused on all of the elements of the education system and coordinated around a set of clear outcomes for students (Fuhrman & Massell, 1992). Systemic reform, or large-scale reform,

is based on the recognition that the various "parts" or components of an education system are interrelated. Systemic reform addresses not only what is occurring in a particular school, but also a broad range of systemic issues, including education policy, teacher preparation, discipline policies, school governance, and resources.

Systemic reform was inspired, in part, by the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), one of the first major studies to address the state of the nation's entire education system. The report's now well-known and dramatic opening painted a bleak picture of American education:

> *Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (p. 5)*

The report recommended that educators establish more rigorous high school graduation requirements, adopt higher standards and expectations for students, spend more time teaching the "basics," improve teacher preparation and the teaching profession, and provide leadership and fiscal support necessary to achieve these reforms.

In many people's minds, attempts to increase the rigor of schooling would have a limited effect on the education system without explicit standards for student performance. As Ravitch argued (1995), creating standards would "improve achievement by clearly defining what is to be taught and what kind of performance is expected" (p. 25). By the late 1980s, bipartisan consensus resulted in a set of **EDUCATION GOALS** to guide the overall course of education reform. At the Education Summit of 1989, President Bush and the nation's governors agreed on broad goals for education, which were later legislated in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994. These goals focused on eight areas: school readiness, school completion, student achievement and citizenship, teacher education and professional development, math and science, adult literacy and lifelong learning, safe and drug-free schools, and parent participation.

Through the Goals 2000 legislation and 1994 amendments to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Act, **STANDARDS** and standards-based assessment began driving state and district policy. Key features of the standards-based reform movement include identifying challenging, state academic standards for what all students should know and be able to do and aligning other aspects of the system, such as testing, accountability, teacher certification, and professional development, with the new standards. In some cases, site-based governance also has been a focus in order to let local educators choose their own instructional programs for helping students achieve standards (Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997).

In many states, accountability and standards movements have merged. States are again embracing the notion of results-based accountability, but this time it is related to student performance on standards-based assessments. States are beginning to use the results on these tests to publicly rank schools and/or close low-performing schools, to transfer or remove principals from low-performing schools, and to prevent students from being promoted to the next grade or graduating from high school (Hoff, 1999).

Although it is too early to determine the extent to which these sanctions will be adopted and acted upon across the 50 states, other forms of results-based accountability are thriving in the form of market-based reforms and responses to school failure. These include various forms of **SCHOOL CHOICE**, particularly charter schools, vouchers, and home schooling. Many states have adopted school choice programs in which parents are allowed to choose their child's school regardless of area of residence. Some states allow parents to choose only schools in their district; others allow them to choose schools in other districts.

Another form of choice for parents and teachers is charter schools. Charter schools are public schools of choice that are granted freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional public schools. In return, they must demonstrate positive academic results. If they do not, districts or other agencies granting the charter may revoke the school's charter. Parents and teachers commonly are drawn to charter schools because they believe they offer higher academic standards, smaller school and class size (most serve an average of 250 students), more innovative approaches, or education philosophies that are more in line with their own. As of 1999, 36 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia had passed charter school legislation, leading to the creation of approximately 1,800 charter schools nationwide.

At the same time that these movements have been unfolding, education experts at universities, nonprofit research and development organizations, and for-profit organizations have been developing **SCHOOL REFORM MODELS**. These developers, sometimes called "design teams," conceive of a reform design; then develop principles, implementation strategies, and supporting materials; and sometimes provide professional development and consulting support to schools and districts that adopt their programs (Stringfield & Datnow, 1998). Examples of these reform models include such widely known programs as the Coalition for Essential Schools and Success For All.

These reform programs are generally regarded to be of two types: (1) *curricular reform programs* that emphasize content in one or more academic disciplines, or (2) *comprehensive programs* that focus on the whole school, including governance, organization, and, often, revised curricular content (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). Reform models vary in terms of a number of dimensions, including goals, types of students and grade levels served, content area or curricular focus, classroom practices and instructional strategies, student assessment, staff development, parent involvement activities, classroom management, and school governance. The extent to which any one model addresses all of these dimensions is the extent to which it is considered to be a comprehensive school reform approach.

Consistent with the central tenet of systemic reform — that sweeping changes need to be made in schools in order for meaningful change to occur — the latest focus of school improvement efforts is **COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM** (CSR), or **WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM**. In 1998, more than 3,000 schools across the nation were using CSR approaches (Education Commission of the States, 1998). The growth in the number of CSR programs can be attributed in large part to the bipartisan congressional initiative begun in 1997, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. The purpose of the CSRD program is to provide financial incentives for schools to adopt comprehensive school reform programs based on reliable research and effective practices with the goal of helping all children meet challenging content and performance goals.

The CSRD program, or "Obey-Porter" program — named for the legislators who introduced it, Rep. David Obey (D-WI) and Rep. John Porter (R-IL) — provides funds for states to distribute in the form of competitive grants to local districts. Schools are awarded a minimum of $50,000 to use to implement comprehensive school reform approaches. These funds are passed from districts to schools, which use them in conjunction with other federal, state, and local funds to adopt CSR programs. According to the legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 1998), CSR programs should meet all nine of the following criteria:

1. *Effective, research-based methods and strategies*: A CSR program uses innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching, and school management, based on reliable research and effective practices that have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics.

2. *Comprehensive design with aligned components*: The program has a comprehensive design for effective school functioning, including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management. The program should address needs identified through a school needs assessment and align the school's curriculum, technology, and professional development into a schoolwide reform plan designed to enable all students — including those from low-income families, with limited English proficiency, or with disabilities — to meet challenging state content and performance standards.

3. *Professional development*: The program provides high-quality and continuous teacher and staff professional development and training.

4. *Measurable goals and benchmarks*: The program has measurable goals for student performance that are tied to the state's challenging content and student performance standards and benchmarks for meeting the goals.

5. *Support within the school*: School faculty, administrators, and staff support the program.

6. *Parental and community involvement*: The program provides for the meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in planning and implementing school improvement activities.

7. *External technical support and assistance*: The program uses high-quality external support and assistance from a CSR entity (which may be a university) with experience or expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement.

8. *Evaluation strategies*: The program includes a plan for the evaluation of both the implementation of school reforms and the student results achieved.

9. *Coordination of resources*: The program identifies how other resources (federal, state, local, and private) available to the school will be used to coordinate services to support and sustain the school reform.

It is important to briefly make three points relative to the current focus on comprehensive school reform. **First, schools may undertake comprehensive school reform without obtaining funding through the federal CSRD program or any other specific source.** Although recently the CSRD program has focused attention on the concept of comprehensive school reform, the concept did not originate with this legislation. Accordingly, this manual is designed to help schools undertake comprehensive school reform and select a particular reform model, if appropriate, regardless of whether or not they seek CSRD funds.

Second, comprehensive school reform addresses change and improvement across the school as a whole. A school should consider its comprehensive school reform program as potentially much broader than any particular reform model. The overall reform program may need to incorporate one or more aspects of several school reform models, since few existing comprehensive reform models cover every aspect of school functioning (Fashola & Slavin, 1998).

Third, there is no official or approved list of CSRD programs. The models noted in the CSRD legislation are listed as *examples* of comprehensive reform models, not as recommended or approved models. Thus, school staff need to carefully research CSR models and claims of effectiveness before adopting any of them.

CHAPTER 3:

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL REFORM

"Small-group instruction," "performance-based learning," "using technology in the classroom." Do these phrases sound familiar? They should! The time period, however, is not the turn of this century, but the last one, when education reformers of the 1880s and 1900s were calling for less emphasis on teacher-centered instruction (Carlson, 1996; Cuban, 1990). Obviously, the idea of education reform has been around for a long time. Yet, the dearth of clear and convincing evidence that reform has improved student scores on standardized measures of achievement has resulted in calls for school reform that makes a difference.

After a century of study and scrutiny, quite a lot is known about the elements of successful school reform. Researchers have examined virtually every aspect of education — from broad topics such as curriculum, instructional processes, and leadership to specific topics such as special education and bilingual education, as well as the change process itself. Several decades of reform efforts and studies of the effects of reform on students have generated a great deal of information about why reform efforts fail. In this chapter, we consider two key reasons. We then highlight key aspects of schools that have undergone successful reform.

WHY SOME REFORM EFFORTS FAIL

In this section, we discuss the two main reasons why many school reform efforts have: 1) reform efforts are often fragmented rather than integrated, and 2) reformers fail to take into account the complexity of school systems when designing and carrying out reform.

Reform Efforts Are Fragmented Rather Than Integrated

Educators face a steady stream of movements, initiatives, mandates, and opportunities. Repeatedly, school and district leaders all too often find themselves simultaneously coordinating several efforts, which all too often are fragmented. School staff often have little understanding of how different efforts initiated by the school, district, state, and/or federal government interrelate, if at all — or how to support them. Pull-out programs, substitutes, and other strategies for freeing up teachers' time for planning and staff development — as well as discontinuity across subject areas — can lead to fragmentation. This, in turn, leads to a dissipation of energy and cynicism among staff members. Many of us have seen teachers' eyes glaze over as they are asked to deal with yet another initiative. The risk is that more and more teachers will stand on the sidelines, knowing that this, too, "shall pass."

It is easy to understand how fragmentation occurs. For starters, schools and districts face a multitude of changing mandates and opportunities. At the same time, because school leaders face constant funding shortages, they tend to pursue numerous opportunities for additional monies. These funds, however, frequently come with strings attached — namely, required changes in policy. As a result, schools are torn in many different directions, often engaging in several

different improvement programs at one. Although quantity over quality is not explicitly recognized as the standard operating procedure, increasingly it is an unfortunate reality.

School Systems Are Complex

School systems are complex organizations. In order for school reform initiatives to be successful, change must occur in many different parts of the system — as we argue in this section — in all three domains of the school system: the technical, personal, and organizational (Cordell & Waters, 1993). The ***technical domain*** of a school system encompasses what and how students learn, that is, the standards, curricula, instructional approaches, and assessment strategies that work together to promote the learning and achievement of all students. Put another way, this domain consists of "the content of schooling." The ***personal domain*** includes school and district leadership; professional development activities supporting teachers' continuing growth; and communication and relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. Put more simply, this domain consists of issues related to "the attitudes and skills of the people in the system." The ***organizational domain*** includes the external environment, stakeholders, resources, technology, and accountability requirements. Put simply, it consists of the "resources and structures of the system," which provide the operating context for the other two domains.

It is important to note that these domains are very much interrelated. They overlap and interact in complex ways. For example, school climate — an aspect of the personal domain — can be influenced by the school's disciplinary practices and procedures, which are related to the organizational domain. As another example, consider the use of test scores to improve instructional practice. Tests and testing procedures are part of the technical domain, but *how test scores are used* to create accountability relates to the school and/or district's organizational policies and procedures. When policies and procedures link test scores and teacher performance, teacher morale and other related issues (personal domain) are never far behind.

The governmental and political context surrounding schools further complicates the challenges educators face. Schools are governed by school districts; and districts are governed by school boards whose membership may consist of community members who have little or no prior experience in public education. Boards hire school superintendents to run districts, an arrangement that often complicates the functioning of districts due to political and personal conflicts. At the same time, districts are typically under the umbrella of state education agencies, which exercise varying degrees of power and control and are influenced by federal legislation. Between and among these layers of governance and control, special interests and political agendas flourish — which sometimes result in the needs of adults coming before the needs of the youth schools are charged to serve. In summary, schools are complex organizations. Reform efforts that ignore this complexity might well be doomed from the start.

WHY SOME SCHOOL REFORM EFFORTS SUCCEED

Despite the obstacles to successful school reform, some schools and districts have demonstrated that it is possible to make and sustain meaningful change. In general, these schools have displayed a number of common characteristics, which we might consider to be the key aspects of

successful school reform. Given that we have drawn these traits from much of the research and observations that inspired the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, you will notice they are markedly similar to the criteria for CSRD.

- Clear goals and standards for student learning
- High-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Integrated improvement efforts
- Buy-in from school staff
- Effective school leadership and management
- Effective professional development
- Meaningful parent and community involvement
- Ongoing use of data for school improvement
- Adequate funding/resources

Clear Goals and Standards for Student Learning

The single most critical measure of success of any school reform effort is its ability to address the specific learning needs of students. Schools must have clear goals for progress, standards for student learning, and strategies for keeping the focus of reform on student learning. Routinely collecting and analyzing student performance data can help determine the extent to which *all* students are meeting standards, detect trends over time, identify patterns of low achievement among particular student groups, and compare performance across grade levels and subject areas.

Effective School Leadership and Management

The efficacy of the principal is arguably one of the most important aspects of successful school-level reform. Principals play a key role in facilitating the development and implementation of each of the primary aspects of successful reform discussed in this section. For reform to be successful, principals must also become active change agents, shaping and reinforcing the culture of the school and helping everyone adapt to change and integrate new practices.

But effective school leadership requires much more than a strong principal. The work of leadership must be shared among leaders at virtually all levels of the school community. Teachers, counselors, other instructional personnel, assistant or vice-principals, and parents, can and should share responsibility for various aspects of reform.

High-Quality Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

Clear, specific content and performance standards are critical elements of reform that make a difference in student learning. Equally important are curricula, instructional strategies, and assessments that are aligned with these standards, consistently implemented across all grade levels and subject areas, and designed to help *all* students meet identified achievement goals.

Students differ greatly in a number of ways, including their learning style, interests, background, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, and physical and mental ability. As a result, school

need to select high-quality curricula, instructional strategies, and assessments that have been shown through reliable research studies to enhance the learning of diverse groups of students.

Integrated Improvement Efforts

Overcoming fragmentation of purposes is often a difficult task. However, integration can and must happen on several levels. First and foremost, unity of purpose must be established through the collective efforts of school leaders and teaching staff. Leaders should work with teachers to clarify that the primary goal of all efforts and initiatives is enhanced student learning. Specific reform activities, improvement efforts, and school initiatives should all be clearly linked to the overarching goal of improved student achievement. Similarly, school reforms should be clearly linked to other initiatives. For example, in the case of Title I schools, mandated improvement plans should be aligned with reform plans.

Staff Support and Buy-In

One of the most frequently cited factors in the successful implementation of reform models is commitment and support from teachers and school staff. Developing staff support typically means giving teachers and other school staff time to learn about prospective reform plans, raise questions and concerns, and offer suggestions and feedback. But initial buy-in is not enough, as support may wane over time as staff encounter obstacles and experience setbacks and failures. Thus, staff support must be nurtured throughout the process of reform. Ownership of and commitment to reform can be sustained in a variety of ways, including ongoing staff development experiences, opportunities to meet with colleagues to share ideas, and to celebrate intermediate successes.

Support for reform efforts is more easily maintained when school staff members regularly engage in thoughtful dialogue and seek answers, rather than debate, comply, dictate, or place blame. In short, teachers' ability to share ideas and make improvements in their practices is critical to long-lasting reform. Successful reformers recognize that the best results occur not when one or two teachers change their practices, but rather when teachers work together to change the practices of everyone in the building (Little, 1986).

Meaningful Parent and Community Involvement

It is widely accepted that parent involvement benefits children's learning and success in school. At least three major factors increase the likelihood that parents will become involved in their children's education: (1) their belief about what is important, necessary, and permissible for them to do on behalf of their children; (2) the extent to which they believe they can have a positive influence on their children's learning; and (3) their perception that their children and the school staff want them to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parent involvement covers a wide variety of activities, including meeting with teachers during conferences, talking informally with teachers or staff, driving or chaperoning for a field trip, volunteering in the classroom, reviewing and helping with homework, and serving on advisory boards. Better parent and community involvement can be encouraged in many ways. Some

schools provide materials or videotapes for parents to use with their children for at-home learning activities. Others have offered evening, after-school, or summer sessions for parents on topics of interest to them.

Effective Professional Development

One decidedly positive outcome of our nation's attention on school reform is the widespread recognition that teachers' professional development is essential for students' success. In the past, staff development was thought of as in-service sessions offered once or twice a year. We now know that effective professional development must be ongoing, integrated into daily activities as much as possible, and closely linked with school improvement goals for student learning and achievement (Hassel, 1999). Using student performance data, school leaders should identify student learning gaps, then consider what skills teachers need to bridge those gaps (Hassel, 2000). But rather than simply providing "sit-and-get" sessions, staff development should occur through a variety of venues, including in-class coaching, study groups, and team meetings.

We also understand that teachers are most likely to grow as professionals when they are given opportunities to collaborate, reflect, and plan together on a regular basis. Through ongoing conversations about teaching and learning, teachers can access a local support system, share strategies and techniques, empower one another to try new approaches, and create both collegiality and accountability among themselves (Little, 1986).

The biggest obstacle to creating opportunities for collaboration is the traditional school schedule. To overcome this obstacle, some schools have restructured the school week to free up a half-day for schoolwide planning and staff development. Others have adopted block scheduling or scheduled students for lunch and recess at the same time to create common periods for teachers. Finally, some schools have found the necessary resources to pay for monthly grade-level team meetings during and/or after school (Barth, 1991).

Adequate Funding and Resources

Although successful school reform is not a function of money alone, virtually all educators agree that it cannot be achieved without adequate funding. Lack of state, district, and school resources to monitor and promote quality curriculum and instruction is a major roadblock to school success (Loveless, 1998). When it comes to comprehensive schoolwide reform efforts, additional funds typically are needed for such things as library materials, technology, planning time for teachers, professional development, specific instructional materials, and other classroom supplies. The key to adequate funding is integrating and pooling resources from a variety of sources. In fact, by reallocating Title I schoolwide funds and other federal and state resources, most schools are able to adopt comprehensive reform models even without a special grant through the federally funded CSRD program.

Ongoing Evaluation and Use of Data for School Improvement

Schools and districts are in a continual process of collecting and reporting data. Virtually no aspect of schooling — from how many students receive free- and reduced lunch, to attendance, achievement, and graduation rates — goes undocumented. These data can be powerful tools for reform when used to (1) understand how the change process is progressing; (2) identify the specific outcomes that are being realized; and (3) determine the improvements, adjustments, and modifications that should be made to keep the process going.

Information is particularly valuable to a system when mid-course corrections are needed. When school leaders, teachers, and staff members have access to reliable information, they can make valid judgments made about what to continue to do, what to modify, and what to stop doing. In this way, feedback can keep reforms on track. Currently, most state-mandated school improvement planning or accountability programs require schools and districts to measure progress toward their goals. So too, CSRD grantees are required to have measurable goals for student performance and benchmarks for meeting those goals and include a plan for the evaluation of the implementation of school reforms and the student results achieved. Rather than viewing these requirements only as mandates with which they must comply, school leaders should see them as a way to meaningfully engage teachers, administrators, parents, and the community, and thus, reinforce commitment to reform.

CHAPTER 4:

DESIGNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM

In this chapter, we present a self-study process that will help you, first, identify student learning needs and second, select appropriate reforms. Conducting this self-study will help your team reach a shared understanding about the status of your school. Giving school staff and parents opportunities to offer input into this process will also help build stakeholder commitment to the reform effort and maximize the probability that your effort will enhance student learning.

The self-study process reviewed in this chapter is presented in three phases:

> **Identifying Student Learning Needs** describes how to identify and gather the student performance data to help you identify your students' needs.
>
> **Assessing School Strengths and Weaknesses** provides guidance for conducting a qualitative analysis of your entire school system.
>
> **Setting Goals** describes how to identify and build consensus around a set of expected outcomes for reform.

As you lay out a schedule for this self-study, be sure to allow time for seeking input and consensus from school staff, parents, and, if necessary, the wider community. This process most likely will take longer than initially anticipated. In fact, the process of seeking input and developing consensus may look more like a series of "loops," rather than a straight line. These iterative loops are something that your team should not only plan for, but also welcome, as they will result in a more useful and productive self-study.

IDENTIFYING STUDENT LEARNING NEEDS

The first step in the process of reform is to gather the facts — in this case, student performance data, which might include the following:

- Results on norm-referenced achievement tests (e.g., Iowa Tests of Basic Skills)
- Percentage of students scoring at proficient levels on the statewide assessment
- Portfolio/alternative assessments
- Percentage of students receiving Ds and Fs
- Student grade-point averages
- Number and type of disciplinary actions taken
- Attendance rates
- Dropout/graduation rates
- College enrollment rates

At this point, it is useful to identify the people who can best help your school's reform team gather, analyze, and summarize student performance data. You may find it helpful to follow these guidelines for gathering data to assess students' learning needs:

1. Identify the types of student performance data available, the form they are in, and how frequently they are reported. Keep in mind that these data most likely are available from a variety of people and places, such as the following:

    a. Centralized computer system at your school
    b. Paper records in filing cabinets in school or guidance offices
    c. Individual teachers
    d. The district office
    e. The state education department

2. Think about any other sources of student performance data that might be available, such as sources your school has used in the past.

3. For those data sources determined to be available, figure out how you will gather the data. It may be helpful to gather reports of each type of data for the past several years so that the team can identify and analyze trends, resulting in a more accurate picture of students' learning needs.

4. Determine if the team needs help understanding different reports of student performance data, such as results on standardized achievement tests. If so, identify ways in which to obtain that help. For example, schedule time for an experienced district staff member to work with your team. Be sure to request help from others as far in advance as possible.

5. Estimate how many meetings it might take to review all the data that will be gathered. If your school is a high school, you may need to allow more time, since generally more data about student performance are available for high school than for elementary students.

Once you have gathered these data, begin to identify student learning needs by comparing student performance in each area with your school goals. You may also want to compare student performance data to district, state, and, in some cases, national performance data. Analyzing these data can point to specific subject areas and grade levels where student performance is low and/or has been decreasing over the past several years. Also, you may find it necessary to disaggregate data. Regrouping the data according to various student characteristics can help identify any racial/ethnic or gender groups with lower performance than other groups.

ASSESSING SCHOOL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

After problem spots have been identified, it is helpful to gauge the extent to which your school exhibits the traits of schools that have successfully undertaken comprehensive reform (as

discussed in Chapter 3). This kind of qualitative analysis — which may involve looking at school climate, parent involvement, and the extent to which the curriculum is aligned with academic standards — can help shed more light on concerns that may have surfaced when you analyzed your school's student performance data.

One approach to assessing school strengths and weakness is to conduct a "mini-research" study that might examine, for example, the extent to which lesson and unit plans actually align with standards. Another approach is to send surveys to students, teachers, or parents to get their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For example, you might gather information about teachers' support for reform, the extent to which professional development improves their skills, and the extent of parent involvement in your school.

Most experienced school and district leaders have found that the best strategy is to use a variety of approaches. Quantitative data can lead to some interesting insights, but these data should be enhanced with qualitative data that help provide background and perspectives on environmental conditions, psychological dynamics, and other factors that may be at work. Discussions or focus groups with parents, teachers, or students can be good vehicles for filling in the picture sketched by quantitative student performance data.

A number of resources are available for conducting school self-assessments. One particularly good resource is *Making Good Choices*, published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (Hassel, 1998). This publication contains surveys that can help your team think carefully about the current state of your school's program.

GATHERING INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have created a picture of your school's strengths and weaknesses that is as complete and accurate as possible, it is time to present this information to your school community. It is important to note that presenting these results is also part of the self-study process. You should not simply hand down "from on high" a laundry list of everything that's wrong with your school to your school staff. Be sure to ask stakeholders for their ideas about for problems spots in student performance data (e.g., low test scores, high dropout rates).

You should also involve stakeholders in helping you look for links between student performance data and self-assessment findings. For example, you might find a connection between teachers' reports that professional development programs lack substance and low student scores in math. Similarly, you might find a correlation between high dropout rates among certain groups of students and parents of these students reporting that they have few opportunities to become involved in school activities.

SETTING GOALS

Once you have identified students' learning needs and the school's strengths and weaknesses, it is important to identify and clearly articulate the goals and objectives for engaging in reform.

Goals are broad, clear statements that serve as a general focus for planning. They should directly relate to student achievement and be linked to standards, ensuring that the focus of reform remains on student learning. Examples of broad reform goals are as follows:

- Improve student achievement in reading
- Improve parent involvement
- Improve attendance
- Improve graduation rates
- Improve school climate/learning environment

In some cases, goals for reform are clear from the outset. For example, community concern about student achievement on the statewide reading test may be the obvious impetus to undertake comprehensive reform. In this case, it may be relatively simple to develop consensus around a set of goals related to improve students' reading skills. In other cases, you may already have a set of school goals, but they may be something that's merely posted on the wall and not terribly important to your school staff. In this case, you may want to review them with faculty and revise them as needed to build a sense of ownership.

It is also possible that you may not yet have a clear set of goals — but, rather, a general, ill-defined sentiment that your school could be "doing better." If so, work with staff members to develop a clear set of goals and objectives for reform. This process most likely will involve gathering input from teachers and/or parents.

SELECTING A RESEARCH-BASED REFORM

Now that your team has identified a clear set of goals, the next step is to design a reform strategy. It may be helpful to adopt an externally developed school reform model (or models) to meet school needs. But keep in mind that any one of the available school reform models will meet some, but likely not all, of your school's needs. As a result, a reform program could potentially incorporate more than one model or different aspects of several models. Moreover, it may need to be complemented by other "home-grown" reforms to help your school develop some of the traits of schools that have successfully undertaken reform efforts.

Also, as noted earlier, reform models vary in the extent to which they are *curriculum* reforms versus *comprehensive* programs focusing on the whole school, including governance and organization. Some models provide highly structured curricula and instructional strategies; others offer a broader philosophical approach, allowing the local school to select its own curriculum. For this reason, a school's plan for comprehensive reform should be seen as potentially much broader in scope than any one externally developed school reform model.

Models should also be selected because they support the school's overall plan and long-term vision and goals for reform. Thus, it's important to map out the "big picture" of reform before beginning the process of examining reform models. Even if your team decides to adopt an externally developed reform model, this is still only one step in a larger effort that takes into account all aspects of your school organization. Most likely, a reform model will still need to be

supported by other changes, such as ongoing professional development for teachers, effective school leadership, meaningful parent involvement, and data-based decision making.

Also bear in mind that schools are complex systems, so simply changing one aspect of the system is usually insufficient to create real change. Instead, consider all parts of the system and how they interrelate to design an effective, lasting reform. One resource for helping you do this is McREL's (2000) *Asking the Right Questions: A Leader's Guide for Systems Thinking About School Improvement*. This guidebook offers a method for seeing the "big picture" of school reform programs and provides examples of what "thinking systemically" looks like in practice.

With the "big picture" in mind, your team may wish to select an externally developed reform model by using the following, three-stage process:

Step 1: Develop a short list of reform models to investigate.

Step 2: Analyze the short list.

Step 3: Engage stakeholders to make a final selection.

Develop a Short List of Reform Models to Investigate

The results of your school's self-study should help narrow the field of prospective models to a handful of candidates that can best meet your student and school needs. To accomplish this, it may be helpful to follow these guidelines to compile a short list of reform models:

Guidelines for Selecting a Preliminary Set of Models

1. Quickly eliminate those models that

   a. do not serve the grade levels of your school,
   b. do not address priority areas identified through the self-study, and
   c. do not meet local, state, or district requirements for adoption.

2. Consult the resources listed in Appendix A to further narrow the list of possible models. In particular, pay close attention to each model's stated goals to determine whether these goals align with your school's goals. Weigh the benefits and trade-offs of each model.

3. As a final criterion for including a model in this preliminary set, contact the developer of each prospective model to make sure the developer's team is available to provide services to your school. In general, eliminate those models for which external support is not available.

Analyze Your Short List

Your team is now ready to research a preliminary set of reform models. This can be done in any number of ways. For example, the team may want to create different subcommittees to investigate each model and report back findings to the whole team. It may also be helpful to follow these guidelines as you go about researching these models:

Examining the Evidence: Questions to Ask

- Is the program's underlying theory clearly stated and based on sound research?
- Does the program appear to be a logical application of that research?
- Do evaluations of the program demonstrate significant achievement gains?
- Does the control for outside factors through random assignment or matched comparison groups?
- Has the program been replicated successfully in a wide range of schools as well as in sites similar to your school?
- Has the program been fully implemented in multiple sites for more than three years?
- How many rigorous studies validate or refute these claims of effectiveness?

1. Use as many means of investigation as possible:
   a. Study and compare detailed information about each model.
   b. Interview the model developers.
   c. Visit other schools using the model. Ask teachers, parents, and school leaders about positive and negative aspects of the model.
   d. Identify any sites that have stopped using the model and find out why.
   e. Read studies and reports documenting the effectiveness and implementation of each model. Carefully examine claims made by model developers and program evaluators (see sidebar).

2. Be systematic about your investigation, asking the same questions about each model and keeping detailed notes.

3. Investigate and document each developer's requirements, if any, for adopting their model. Consider whether your school can meet these requirements.

Engage Stakeholders to Make a Final Decision

If the entire reform team has not been involved in investigating the "short list" of models, share the results of your work with them. It is important for the team members to understand these results and to feel included in the decision-making process.

At this point, two or three of the models may have emerged as strong candidates or a larger set may remain viable. The final selection of a model (or models) should be made on the basis of fit with your school's overall plan for reform and the highest priority needs. As noted earlier, any one model is not likely to address all of these needs. Thus, you will probably need to work with stakeholders to identify top priorities, then determine which reform models will best address these needs.

Also, consider the needs that a reform model does not address and consider how you might meet them by using existing programs, modifying them, or designing new ones. In addition, your team may need to determine what support your district can provide to help you address those needs. As you identify these components, be sure to consider how they might be integrated what resources will be needed to support them.

Making the Final Decision: Questions to Ask

- How will this reform address our highest priority needs?
- How can we address needs not met by this reform?
- What existing programs or new programs could address these needs?
- What support can our district provide to help us address our highest priority needs?
- How can we integrate the various reforms we adopt?
- What resources will need to implement these reforms?
- To what extent will teachers and the wider school community support these reforms?
- Do we have a clear agreement with the reform developer regarding costs, services, and results?

Your final decision about the reform(s) to adopt should be made only after gauging the extent of faculty support and buy-in. Some reform model developers, in fact, require that a high percentage of the faculty vote to affirm the adoption of their program. But regardless of whether a reform developer requires it, faculty support is essential. You should also seek support from a wider segment of the school community, including parents, community members involved in the school, school committees and support teams, and district administrators.

The final decision about which reform(s) to adopt should not be made until after negotiations with reform developers have yielded a clear agreement about the services to be provided, arrangements for working together, costs, and expected results. Obviously, selecting the reform that best fits your school's needs and goals may be time consuming. But since this is a decision your school most likely live with for a long time, the up-front investment in time and resources is well worth the effort.

CHAPTER 5:

PLANNING FOR REFORM

Most people have many opportunities to recognize that foresight always wins in the long run! Detailed planning is every bit as important to the success of comprehensive reform program as the selection of a reform model to help achieve overall goals. Increasingly, states and districts are recognizing the importance of allocating the time and financial resources needed to adequately prepare for a comprehensive school reform effort as evidenced by the availability of year-long planning grants.

ACTION PLANS

Most school staff members are all too familiar with the tedium of developing required plans and proposals for funding or in response to state accountability requirements. But it's important to shed the "compliance" mentality when it comes to detailed planning. A well-thought-out plan of action can help ensure success by

- articulating the relationships among student needs, school needs, and reform efforts;
- guiding your school through the often-turbulent early stages of change;
- identifying the resources needed to implement the reform program;
- describing how an externally developed reform model can help realize overall reform goals;
- establishing the basis for evaluating program implementation and outcomes; and
- providing a framework for monitoring implementation, reviewing progress, and making adjustments along the way.

Useful action plans for education programs consist of four interrelated elements:

- Goals
- Outcomes
- Activities
- Evaluation

Goals

The first component of your action plan should be the broad statement of goals developed during the process of creating a comprehensive reform approach. Goals are simple statements about desired change; they do not include the programs and activities you intend to implement to accomplish these goals. For example, as shown in Figure 5a, a goal might be stated as simply and broadly as "Improving student performance in reading."

Outcomes

Outcome objectives are more specific statements of the goals. They describe measurable end products for each goal — the desired knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitudes that a target group of students should display in a given time period. Examples of outcomes are as follows:

- Third-graders participating in the peer-tutoring program will show progress next year on at least two of four selected criteria.
- Over the next school year, our middle school students' discipline referral rate will decrease by 25 percent from last year's discipline referral rate.
- Next year, the number of parents reporting they were meaningfully involved in their high school children's education will increase by 20 percent.

When drafting outcome objectives, consider the following guidelines:

1. For each goal, identify the target group to which it applies. For students, this typically means specifying grade levels.

2. Think about the different types of evidence to gather that might indicate whether a goal has been accomplished. For example, improved student achievement could be documented in the following ways:

   - Measures of proficiency on state standards
   - Norm-referenced achievement tests
   - Portfolio or alternative assessments
   - Grade-point averages
   - Failure rates
   - Teacher-developed classroom assessments

3. Select the most appropriate measures, which often means the most readily available measures. Think about how much change is reasonable to expect and over what period of time.

4. As shown below, combine responses to 1, 2, and 3 into an objective specifying who will do what, by when, and how it will be measured.

Who >>	*The number of 1st- through 5th-grade students who meet the state standards in reading*
Will do what >>	*will increase by 25%*
When >>	*over the next two years*
As measured by >>	*on the statewide standards assessment*

5. Write as many outcome objectives as appropriate to measure accomplishment of each goal.

Activities

Whereas goals and outcomes are concerned with identifying the desired results of reform, activities are the things your school will actually do to achieve stated goals and objectives. They are the services and programs schools provide for all of the groups they serve — students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Each outcome objective has at least one set of activities designed to support it, but any one set of activities may be designed to meet more than one outcome objective. And, as shown in Figure 5a, they are also specified in enough detail to serve as a basic road map for implementation.

Figure 5a. Example of Related Goal, Outcome Objectives, and Activities

Goal: Improve student performance in reading	
Outcome: Over a two-year period, the number of 1st through 5th grade students who meet the state standards in reading will increase by 25%.	**Outcome**: Over a two-year period, 5th grade students previously scoring in the bottom quartile of the ITBS reading subtest will score at or above the 25th percentile.
Year 1 Activities: 1. School staff members and the principal attend a 5-day summer institute on XYZ reading program. 2. Teachers begin to use XYZ curriculum materials and instructional strategies in classrooms. 3. Staff developers for XYZ make monthly site visits to provide follow-up training sessions, demonstration lessons, and in-classroom coaching and support. 4. Grade-level teams and literacy coordinator hold monthly meetings to help plan one teacher's lesson (using XYZ), observe the teacher implement the lesson, and help the teacher improve his or her use of the program. 5. Teachers participate in bi-weekly grade-level planning meetings during which they discuss issues, challenges, and successes in implementing the program — at both the classroom and school-wide levels. 6. The literacy coordinator, grade-level team leaders, and principal meet with XYZ staff developers to review the status of program implementation and design support activities for the coming school year.	

When designing reform activities, consider the following guidelines:

1. Using conclusions drawn about solutions to identified school needs, develop a set of activities that will help you accomplish your goals and objectives.

2. Show each set of activities as a numbered list of chronological steps in sufficient detail to guide implementation for these not otherwise familiar with the plan.

3. Identify the following aspects of the activity:

   - The person or group primarily responsible for the activity
   - The time period for the activity or the targeted completion date
   - The resources needed to support the activity

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4. Note that resources are typically expressed in terms of monetary support, but can include other types of resources, such as the following:

    - Consultation with district personnel
    - Meeting space
    - Video/electronic equipment to be borrowed from the district
    - Staff release time

EVALUATION

Well-designed evaluation plans include evaluations of both implementation and outcomes. *Implementation evaluation* documents the extent to which each activity listed in the plan was implemented as specified. Evaluating implementation provides the basis for understanding the results observed. If a specified objective was not met, it might be because the supporting activities were not conducted as intended. For activities that are part of an externally developed reform model, consult with the model developer to get the necessary details for completing this part of the action plan. Consider the following guidelines for an *implementation evaluation:*

1. For each activity, list the type of evidence that can be collected to document the extent to which the activity took place as intended. As shown in Figure 6c, this evidence might include

    - Attendance records
    - Logs
    - Lesson plans
    - Assignments completed
    - Minutes of meetings

2. Documentation should include numbers of participants, how often each activity was held, and a description of what took place.

Outcome evaluation involves determining whether the outcome objectives have been met. For example, consider the first outcome in Figure 5a: *Over a two-year period, the number of 1st through 5th grade students who meet the state standards in reading will increase by 25%.* To determine whether this objective has been met, should leaders would simply compare the percentage of 1st through 5th graders who met the state's reading standards at the end of one school year with the percentage who meet the standards for the following two years. Consider the following guidelines when designing an *outcome evaluation*:

1. Note that in general you are

    - collecting or compiling data for a pretest or baseline measure;
    - collecting or compiling data at a later time (e.g., a posttest); and
    - analyzing data to identify changes between the two points in time.

2. Consider the following sources of help in designing and carrying out the evaluation components of your plan:

    - District-level staff with expertise in evaluation
    - Reform model developers who can provide evaluation support (technical assistance, instrumentation, assessments) and may have their own data collection requirements
    - An external evaluation consultant
    - Other sources of more detailed information on evaluation, such as McREL's *Evaluating for Success* (1999)

REFINING THE PLAN

As you create an action plan, make sure that the traits of schools that have effectively undertaken reform efforts are addressed *within an element of the action plan* and/or in the *quality and processes of carrying out the action plan*, as shown in Figure 5b. Obviously, the traits of successful schools listed in Figure 5b do not describe everything that will be covered in your action plan. During the self-study, needs identification, and planning process, you most likely will have identified other programs and activities to support both student success and parent involvement. Thus, these will also be included in your action plan, as explained in the next section.

Figure 5b. Correlation between Traits of Effective Reform Efforts and an Action Plan

Traits of Schools Engaging in Effective Reform	Action Plan Element or Aspect
Clear Goals and Standards for Student Learning	Goals and Outcome Objectives
Quality Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Effective Professional Development	Activities
Ongoing Evaluation and Use of Data for School Improvement	Evaluation
Adequate Funding and Resources	Resources Needed
Integration of Improvement Efforts Effective School Leadership and Management Meaningful Parent and Community Involvement	Quality & Process of Carrying Out Plan

Once your entire plan has been drafted, scrutinize it with these questions in mind:

- What issues and challenges are likely to threaten successful implementation?
- How can these issues and challenges be addressed now?
- In what ways might the plan for implementing the reform model need to be adapted to fit our local context?

- Based on consultations with the reform model developer, what adaptations can be made while still maintaining the integrity of the program?
- In what ways are we addressing each of the components of successful school reform?
- How well integrated is the plan? Does it incorporate all the school improvement efforts and initiatives we are committed to?

Revise the plan based on this analysis. Keep in mind that any additional time and effort necessary to refine the plan at this point can only help to more fully ensure the ultimate success of your program.

Adapting the Plan for Other Purposes

Some funding sources, such as the CSRD program, require that proposals highlight particular elements or include additional ones, including the following:

- Data-based descriptions of student and school needs and descriptions of how the plan addresses them
- Evidence of school and community support for the plan
- District plans for evaluating the comprehensive reform program
- A research base that validates the effectiveness of the reform model
- Evaluation plans that specifically consider the integrity of implementation, parent participation, staff development, and sustained stakeholder support

Based on the work undertaken using the chapters of this manual, your team have a fairly thoroughly drafted action plan, such as the one shown in Figure 5c. In Chapter 6, we turn to implementing the plan and sustaining its success.

Figure 5c. Example Action Plan for Comprehensive School Reform Program

Goal Statement: Improve student performance in reading				
Outcome Objective 1: *Over a two-year period, the number of 1st through 5th grade students who meet the state standards in reading will increase by 25%.*	**Outcome Evaluation Steps:** 1. *For each grade level, at the beginning of year 1 (or the end of the previous year) establish a baseline percentage of students meeting state reading standards.* 2. *At the end of year 1, establish the percentage of students meeting state reading standards.* 3. *Calculate the percentage change over year 1.* 4. *At the end of year 2, establish the percentage of students meeting state reading standards.* 5. *Calculate the percentage change over year 2, & over years 1 & 2.*			
Activities	*Person or Group Responsible*	*Projected Time Period or Completion Date*	*Resources Needed*	***Implementation Evaluation:*** *(Evidence Activity Accomplished)*
Year 1 1. *School staff members and principal attend a 5-day summer institute on XYZ reading program.*	*Literacy coordinator*	*Aug 19–24*	*$750/day for XYZ staff developer*	*Daily institute attendance records & agendas*
2. *Teachers begin use of XYZ curriculum materials and instructional strategies in their classrooms*	*School staff*	*Sept–May*	*Materials cost for XYZ program*	*Teacher logs/lesson plans, observations by literacy coordinator*
3. *Staff developers for XYZ reading program make monthly site visits to provide a) follow-up training sessions, b) demonstration lessons, and c) in-classroom coaching.*	*XYZ staff developer*	*Sept–May*	*$750/day for staff developer x 32 days.*	*Site visit logs documenting (a), (b), (c)*
4. *Grade-level teams and literacy coordinator meet monthly to plan a teacher's lesson (using XYZ), observe lesson being taught, and debrief on how the teacher can improve program implementation.*	*Literacy coordinator*	*Sept–May*	*Substitutes to cover classrooms for teachers*	*Collegial reflection logs showing frequency of planning & observation by grade level; notes from meetings.*
5. *Initially XYZ staff developer facilitates dialogue and reflection, but over time literacy coordinator becomes facilitator.*	*XYZ staff developer, literacy coordinator*	*Dec–May*	*N/A*	*See number 4*
6. *Grade-alike teachers meet bi-weekly to discuss issues, challenges, and successes in implementing the program.*	*Grade-level team leaders*	*Sept–May*	*Teacher pay for after-school meetings*	*Grade-level team meeting minutes*
7. *Literacy coordinator, grade-level team leaders, and principal meet with XYZ staff developers to review status of the XYZ program implementation and design staff development, coaching, and support activities for the coming school year.*	*Principal*	*May*	*$750 daily rate for XYZ staff developer*	*Meeting minutes*

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Year 2 8. During late summer, new teachers attend orientation that includes overview of XYZ program and introduction to its materials and instructional strategies.	Principal	3rd week of August	In-service teacher pay	Orientation attendance records and agenda
9. Entire staff, literacy coordinator, and principal attend 1.5-day advanced training institute on XYZ program.	Literacy coordinator	3rd week of August	15 days @ $750/ day for staff developer	Institute attendance records and agenda
10. Teachers implement XYZ program in classrooms.	School staff	Sept–May	N/A	Teacher logs/lesson plans; observations by literacy coordinator
11. Literacy coordinator facilitates monthly collegial dialogue and reflection process for each grade-level team.	Literacy coordinator	Sept–May	N/A	Collegial dialogue and reflection logs showing frequency of planning, observation, & debrief meetings by grade level; notes from meetings
12. Staff developers for XYZ reading program make two week-long site visits per semester to provide (a) follow-up training sessions, (b) demonstration lessons, and (c) in-classroom coaching and support.	XYZ staff developer	Oct, Dec, Feb, April	$750/day for XYZ staff developer x 4 visits X 4 days/visit	Site visit logs documenting (a), (b), (c)
13. Teachers from the same grades meet bi-weekly to discuss issues, challenges, and successes in implementing the program.	School staff	Sept–May	Teacher pay for after-school meetings	Grade-level team meeting minutes
14. The literacy coordinator, grade-level team leaders, and principal meet with XYZ staff developers to review the status of the XYZ program implementation and design staff development, coaching, and support activities for the coming school year.	Principal	May	$750 daily rate for XYZ staff developer	Meeting minutes

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CHAPTER 6:

SUSTAINING SUCCESSFUL REFORM

Your school is now ready to embark on its most crucial work — implementing the reform plan you have invested substantial time and effort developing over the past several months. Bear in mind, however, that your school will not change over night and that the road ahead may be rocky at times. Change will unfold over time, and people will respond to it differently.

THE NATURE OF CHANGE

When Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb, he made it look like a gaslight to increase the likelihood of its adoption. He understood that human perception can be the biggest hurdle to implementing change (Conner, 1992). Although we sometimes belittle others because they resist change or because we mistakenly think that they lack the capacity or desire to change, they may, in fact, be troubled by the uncertainty of the future and how change will affect them.

Most people handle small changes easily enough. But too much change at once, especially too much unexpected change with consequences people don't fully understand, can result in failure. Certainly, schools vary in their capacity for change, just as individuals vary in terms of their comfort level with change. Some people are more venturesome and willing to immediately take risks. Others want to be convinced that a new idea will work before they try it. Most people fall somewhere in between.

Researchers studying change processes in education systems and other organizations have developed various theories about how change occurs. These researchers have found that in general, they have found that organizations typically move from the status quo, in which people are maintaining the old way of doing things (or, at most, tinkering a bit with new ways of doing things), to an initial ***awareness*** that more substantive change is needed. Once enough individuals in the organization sense the need for change, a stage of ***exploration*** begins, during which teachers, administrators, and policymakers study and visit places that are trying new approaches. However, during this stage, not everyone supports change. Some people resist change, are apathetic about it, or fail to see how it applies to them.

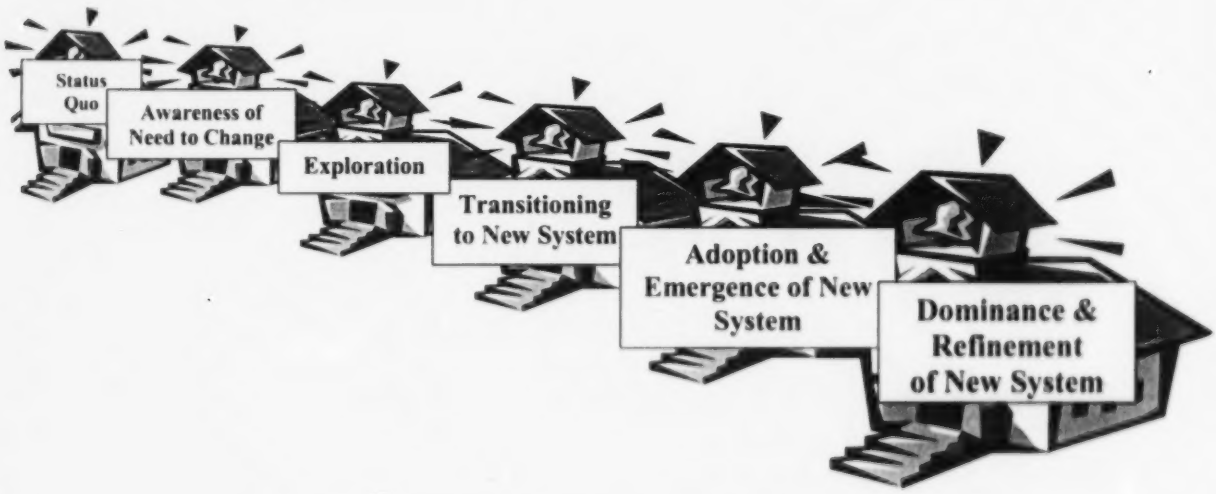
During the ***transitioning*** phase, people grow more concerned about change and, as new practices are put in place, begin to see how change will affect them. During this phase, individuals learn about the change, then eventually become persuaded of its value and decide to support it. At first, the use of the new practice or innovation may seem awkward or forced, but over time, it will become more routine.

As change becomes more routine and ingrained into daily practices, the transitioning phase gives way to the early stages of ***adoption***, during which new practices emerge and resources are used

to support change. At this point, staff members begin to devote their energies to integrating new practices with other efforts to improve their effect on student learning.

Finally, emergence gives way to ***dominance*** of the new system, during which users turn their attention to refining the original innovation based on lessons learned from its implementation. Figure 6a graphically summarizes this process, showing that change occurs in stages over time, an idea that is important to keep in mind as we consider the components of effective school reform in the next section. Most likely, these variances are evident in your own school community as you undertake the process of transforming into a new system.

Figure 6a. Stages of Change in Schools


Status Quo
Awareness of Need to Change
Exploration
Transitioning to New System
Adoption & Emergence of New System
Dominance & Refinement of New System

In summary, change occurs slowly, sometimes more slowly than school leaders might like. This is because staff members are not always on the same page. Some may support change outright; others may adopt a "wait-and-see" approach; still others may flatly resist change. School leaders need to be aware that at any stage in the process, people may need different kinds of encouragement and support.

When you began planning for comprehensive reform, at least some of your team members were aware of the need for change, which the self-study process helped clarify. The team explored possibilities for reform, then mapped out a detailed plan, which your school should now be poised to carry out. Working through these initial stages perhaps made it clear that you have already begun transitioning to the new system.

During this middle stage of reform, your school community may display these characteristics:

- The initial use of new methods and strategies is more mechanical than smooth, marked by struggles with logistics and task management.
- Individuals are concerned about personal issues (how the reform program will affect them) and managerial issues (how to implement the program).

- There are ups and downs, fits and starts, and attempts to return to how things were.
- Even those who originally expressed support for the program display varying degrees of enthusiasm for the program.

USING AN INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH

Given the challenges in the trial-and-error phase of early implementation, is there any way to sustain the momentum of reform? Yes, there is. Maintaining the spirit of inquiry that guided the work of the reform team thus far is a critical element in ensuring that reform moves forward. Keeping this spirit of inquiry means that the adults in the school community and those most responsible for sustaining reform view themselves as a community of learners, displaying all or some of the following characteristics (see Preskill & Torres, 1999):

- Experimenting with strategies and, at the same time, foreseeing problems
- Seeking consensus in decision-making processes
- Relying on one another for information and learning
- Seeing themselves as part of a larger whole — more than the sum of their individual relationships
- Engaging in self-examination and critical reflection
- Providing opportunities to hear dissenting opinion, and
- Creating a spirit of cooperation, rather than competition

The ongoing dialogue and reflection that communities of learners are engaged in requires them to have valid and reliable information about how well their system is working. The evaluation components of your school's comprehensive reform plan are designed to provide that information. The key is to make sure that the reform team and school leaders use this feedback in a way that meaningfully and routinely engages teachers and other decisionmakers so that they can understand how the school is functioning and how it can be improved.

The following section addresses three major aspects of using an inquiry-based, continuous improvement approach to sustaining comprehensive reform:

- collection of implementation data
- routine use of implementation data
- making sense of outcome data

COLLECTION OF IMPLEMENTATION DATA

Regular, well-defined, and consistent data collection is critical for monitoring the extent to which reform programs are implemented in the quality with which they are implemented. Schools routinely collect data documenting the education services and activities they provide and to whom. But these data often are aggregated at the end of the year when reports are due and are not necessarily collected and examined on an ongoing basis. Nor is the quality of these data

always good. Data sets are frequently incomplete, and the data that do exist are inaccurate. Obtaining high-quality implementation data requires

- developing forms that accurately document important aspects of implementation,
- providing instruction for implementers on how to record data,
- making data collection a regular part of implementers' responsibilities,
- routinely checking on the quality and consistency of data collection, and
- resolving any problems that this checking uncovers.

Problems with implementation data most often are discovered when the team tries to use the data to understand how well the program is operating. As a result, it may be difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions about the progress of implementation. To avoid such frustrations, you may need to assist implementers with data collection by revising forms, providing additional instruction or time to carry out data collection, or clarifying the importance of data collection. Also bear in mind that when implementers themselves are involved in using data for decision making, they are more likely to be invested in its collection.

Routine Use of Implementation Data

A critical element of reform is setting up ways in which to routinely use implementation data. You will need to decide whom to involve, how regularly they should meet, what they should do, and which data they should summarize and report to the reform team.

You may also want to revisit the configuration of the reform team and decide if it is the right group to monitor and help sustain reform. You might want your team to include decision makers such as principals, assistant principals, literacy coordinators, grade-level team leaders, and/or parents, who can develop a shared understanding of the implications of the implementation findings. The challenge in creating the right team is to strike a balance between wider stakeholder involvement and the need to work under time and resource constraints.

Knowing the time requirements for the implementation team also will guide the process of selecting members, since the group should meet no less than once a month to review implementation data and discuss successes, issues, and challenges. In the beginning, it will be important for the team to see that program activities are being implemented as scheduled and, if not, to determine what support is needed so that they can be. Much of the team's work also will depend on the availability of implementation data that have been summarized and presented in a useful report form. Thus, your school may wish to hire an evaluation consultant to provide technical assistance on the design of instruments, data collection, and data analysis and reporting.

Making Sense of Outcome Data

After a school year, your team may have outcome evaluation findings to review and interpret. However, although schools are under pressure to show student achievement gains quickly, it may not be appropriate to look at outcome data until as much as two years have passed, which gives teachers adequate time to learn and adopt new curricula and instructional strategies.

If the reform team has been routinely reviewing and discussing findings about program implementation, it will be in a good position to understand findings from the evaluation of outcomes. Simply put, if you have a clear idea about how well the program is being implemented, you should also be able to discern whether results — or a lack thereof — can truly be attributed to the program. As your team receives and interprets outcome data, you may find it necessary to adjust your outcome objectives because you are learning more about what growth is reasonable to expect over a given period of time.

Completing the Transformation

Using an inquiry-based approach to monitoring and sustaining your school's reform program can be a significant factor in moving your school past the middle stages of change. As teachers, administrators, and staff become more comfortable and competent implementing the reform program, energies can be devoted to refining it. Concerns can shift from *how to implement* the program to *how students are being affected* by the program.

When people see positive results for students, they are more likely to be committed to maintaining and supporting the program. As a result, collaboration will increase and the program will be refined and expanded. This movement will be possible because your school has truly transformed itself into a community of learners that includes not only its students, but the adults charged to serve them as well.

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APPENDIX A:
SCHOOL REFORM RESOURCES

The following publications and Web sites are useful resources to consult to help you (1) understand the vast array of choices and (2) access information about different reform models.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1998). *Catalog of School Reform Models* (1st ed.) Portland, OR: Author. www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog

This catalog and its addendum provide descriptions of 26 *entire-school reform models* and 31 *content-based reform models*. The catalog also provides, in table format, an estimation of how well each entire-school reform model addresses each of the nine CSRD components. It also includes a table for rating evidence of effectiveness in four areas: theory/research foundation, evaluation-based evidence of effectiveness, implementation, and replicability.

Wang, M.C., Haertel, G. D., and Walberg, H. J. (1998). *Achieving Student Success: A Handbook of Widely Implemented Research-Based Educational Reform Models.* Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success. www.reformhandbook-lss.org

This handbook provides information on the design and implementation requirements for a variety of school reform models. The first section focuses on analyzing some of the important elements of widely implemented reform programs, including primary focus, curricular vs. comprehensive designs, program goals, grade levels, and major program practices. The handbook gives detailed explanations about each of these components as well as information about how to successfully implement each program, followed by expected results. Lastly, it provides tools to help schools select the right program.

New American Schools. (1998). *Blueprints for School Success: A Guide to New American Schools Design*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Services.

The *Blueprints* guidebook describes the eight design models supported by New American Schools (NAS), a nonprofit, nonpartisan public education reform organization. The guide gives background information on the origins, goals, and activities of NAS, as well as eight- to ten-page descriptions of each of the eight designs. *Blueprints* also includes a set of guidelines to help schools or districts choose the design best suited for them and addresses how to successfully implement and maintain these designs. It also includes several appendices, which offer sample materials and agendas from NAS partner districts, assessment grids comparing characteristics of traditional schools with those of schools supporting comprehensive reform, a planning guide for holding a NAS introductory fair, and a state/district timeline for introducing schools to NAS designs.

American Institutes for Research (1999). ***An Educators' Guide To Schoolwide Reform.*** **Washington, DC: Educational Research Service.**

This resource provides four- to six-page profiles and ratings for 24 reform models. The report provides information on the number of schools using each model, estimated first-year costs, ratings of research evidence, and support developers provide schools that use the models. It also lists papers, articles, and books about the models.

Education Commission of the States (ECS). (1999). ***Improving The Quality Of Education.*** **Denver, CO: ECS. www.ecs.org/ecs/ecsweb.nsf**

This Web site gives detailed descriptions of 39 school reform programs. The site categorizes each program according to one or more of the following descriptions: at-risk, comprehensive school reform, curriculum, mentoring, reading, secondary education, standards, technology, and urban. It provides the following detailed information about each program: background and scope, philosophy and goals, program components, evidence of effectiveness, professional development and support, implementation, costs, considerations, policy issues and questions, resources, and contact information.

CSRD Awards Database. **Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). www.sedl.org/csrd/awards.html**

This national, online database includes schools that have been awarded CSRD funds to implement research-based comprehensive school reform models. Searching the database can generate a list of awardees by state, including total number of awards per state, amount of money awarded per state, and average Title I status and poverty rate for schools in each state. It also provides a list of reform models implemented with CSRD funding, including how many schools are using each model.

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD). **Washington, DC: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform**

This official Department of Education Web site of the CSRD program provides a wide variety of resources to help schools undertake comprehensive school reform, including background information on the program, links to CSRD-related publications and resources, and state-by-state contact information for schools interested in pursuing a CSRD grant.

The National Clearinghouse on Comprehensive School Reform. **The George Washington University. www.goodschools.gwu.edu**

This Web site provides the most recent research and evaluations of comprehensive school reform designs, models, and strategies. It also provides links to tools to help educators implement comprehensive school reform programs.